Obituary

R. J. WILLAN, C.B.E., M.V.O., M.S., F.R.C.S.

Professor R. J. Willan, who died in London on January 12 at the age of 77, was for many years an outstanding surgeon in the north of England, and his reputation was high throughout the surgical world. Although a general surgeon, he was particularly well known for his genito-urinary work. He gave devoted service to his hospital, the Royal Victoria Infirmary, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and to his university; he reached flag rank in the R.N.V.R. and was surgical adviser to the Ministry of Health; and he was a valued counsellor in the affairs of the Royal College of Surgeons of England and of the British Medical Association.

[Dorothy Wilding

Robert Joseph Willan was born on January 10, 1878, the second son of John Willan, J.P., of Durham. From Durham School he went on to the University of Durham, graduating M.B., B.S., with honours, in 1906. He won the Gibb scholarship in pathology in 1904, the Charlton scholarship in the principles and practice of medicine in 1905, and the Stephen Scott scholarship in 1908. Later, in 1920, he was awarded the Heath scholarship, which is awarded, also by Durham University, for an essay or paper based on personal investigations. He took the F.R.C.S. in 1908, and in the following year proceeded to the M.S., with first-class honours. After graduation Willan was house-surgeon and surgical registrar at the Royal Victoria Infirmary and senior house-surgeon at St. Peter's Hospital, London. In 1914 he was elected to the honorary staff of the Royal Victoria Infirmary as assistant surgeon, becoming full surgeon in 1922, and his skill, resolution, and hard work quickly gained him a wide reputation and an extensive practice. In due course he became senior honorary surgeon to the Infirmary, and then consulting surgeon when he retired in 1938, and for some time he was chairman of the honorary medical and surgical staff committee. An appointment of which he was particularly proud was that of honorary life governor of the Infirmary made soon after his retirement. He also served as honorary surgeon to the Ingham Infirmary, South Shields, to the Newcastle-upon-Tyne Dental Hospital, and to the Whickham and District Cottage Hospital. When the late Professor G. Grey Turner came south to become professor of surgery at the British Postgraduate Medical School at Hammersmith in 1935 Willan succeeded him in the chair of surgery in Durham University, a post which he filled with distinction until his retirement in 1942. He was then appointed emeritus professor. He was a past-president of the Durham University Medical Society and of the Newcastle upon Tyne and Northern Counties Medical Society.

At an early stage in his career Willan joined the Volunteers, being attached to the Durham Light Infantry. Later he transferred to the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve, retiring in 1933 with the rank of surgeon-captain after many years' service. During the first world war he served with the Grand Fleet and was for a time medical adviser to Prince Albert (later King George VI), and he also treated and gained the friendship of Admiral Jellicoe. He was awarded the Volunteer Decoration in 1919; and he was Honorary Surgeon to King George V from 1930 to 1933.

In the second world war he again served the Royal Navy as consultant in surgery for Scotland, with the rank of surgeon rear-admiral, and he was also surgical adviser to No. 1 Region of the Ministry of Health. He was appointed M.V.O. in 1915, O.B.E. in 1919, and C.B.E. in 1946.

From his early days in Newcastle Willan took a great interest in the work of the British Medical Association. Beginning as honorary secretary of the Newcastle-upon-Tyne Division in 1912, he was scientific secretary of the North of England Branch from 1915 to 1922, and his merits in these posts gained him the position of chairman of the Division in 1924–5 and president of the Branch in 1929–30. Much of the success of the Association's Annual Meeting held at Newcastle in 1921 was due to his organizing ability as honorary local secretary of the meeting. He served as a vice-president of the Section of Surgery at the Glasgow Meeting of the B.M.A. in 1922, was a representative to the Centenary Meeting held in London in 1932, and a member of the Council for a year (1931–2). He worked on a number of committees of the Association, and was particularly interested in the Science Committee, of which he was a member for nearly 30 years. He was chairman of its library subcommittee from 1946 until his death and was closely concerned with the move of the library to its present home in the garden-court wing of B.M.A. House.

Willan wrote a large number of articles for the various medical journals, articles chiefly concerned with subjects relating to the genito-urinary organs. All his writings were characterized by sound and practical common sense. In 1939 the seal of their approval was given to Willan by his surgical *confrères* when he was elected to the council of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, and he remained on the council for eight eventful years.

Of medium height and sturdy in build, Willan had the misfortune to lose the sight of one eye through an accident in later life, but he was never heard to complain of this infirmity. Good-natured in temperament, quiet in demeanour, rather reticent in giving his opinion, he could always be relied on to speak to the point. After his retirement from hospital and private practice he moved to London, where he regularly attended the Savoy Chapel, for he was very proud of his Membership of the Royal Victorian Order and he loved the quiet and the atmosphere of that religious oasis. After coming to London Professor Willan interested himself in medical charity. He was a member for some years of the council of Epsom College, where he was for two years chairman of the Special Committee: after that he was chairman of the Conjoint Committee for one year, but in 1954 had to decline nomination for re-election owing to the state of his health. He was also for a few years on the committee of management of the Medical Insurance Agency.

Professor Willan's wife, formerly Miss Dorothy E. Shawyer, died in 1949, after they had been married 39 years. There were one son and two daughters of the marriage.

G. McC. writes: No medical officer who has served on the permanent list of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve will have failed to have noted with regret the death of Robert Joseph Willan, for, although he was a surgeon and teacher of repute, it was his connexion with, and career in, the Royal Navy of which he was most ready to talk in his later years. As a very young man he joined the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve shortly after its foundation. Serving in the years immediately prior to the first world war, he took an active part in training and preparing the Tyne Division for the part this Division was to take and for which he himself was mobilized in August, 1914. During his four and a half years of active service he wrote what became a minor classical publication entitled, *Clinical Notes for Surgeon Probationers*, which became the medical Bible for all those unqualified medical students who had medical charge of destroyers and other small ships. His place as a member of the R.N.V.R. in the Royal Navy became established when, as surgeon in the Hospital Ship *Plessey*, he was called upon to operate, in an emergency, on the Duke of York, who was later to become King George VI.

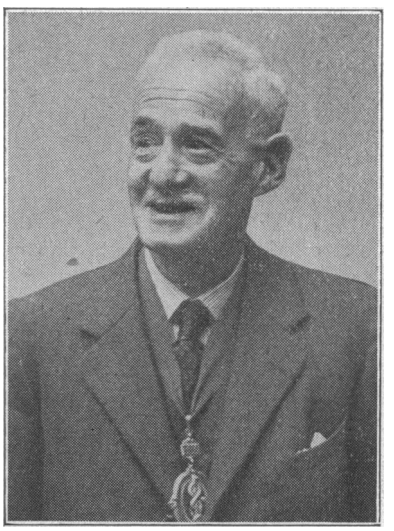
After the war he continued as a senior medical officer, attaining the maximum rank allowed in the Reserve, of surgeon captain, and in that rank holding the position of King's Honorary Surgeon. Retiring on the age limit in 1935, he kept close touch with his old Division and with Naval medical thought, and in 1939, on the outbreak of the last war, it was a great grief to him that he was considered too old to serve. Later he was re-employed as a surgeon captain (retd.), R.N.V.R., and was finally promoted to the rank of acting surgeon rear-admiral, R.N., which was a source of pride to himself and of satisfaction to those who knew him and had worked with him, and was interpreted as a tribute to the permanent Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve Medical Branch. After the war he kept up his connexion with the Tyne Division, and liked nothing better than to come North from his retirement to talk over old times with other "old salts."

J. B. MILLER, M.D., LL.D., D.P.H.

Dr. J. B. Miller, of Bishopbriggs, whose death at home on January 14 we record with deep regret, was chairman of the Representative Body from 1946 to 1948, and one of the most popular and respected figures for many years in the central affairs of the British Medical Association. He seasoned its assemblies with his humour and wit, but behind the drollery was a keen intellect, practical wisdom, and a notable capacity for friendship. He was 77 at the time of his death.

In the Association, after filling many positions in Scotland, including the chairmanship of the Scottish Committee, and also undertaking much useful work at the London headquarters, Dr. Miller was unanimously called to the chairmanship of the Representative Body, the first Scottish practitioner to hold that office. It is an office which demands, not so much skill in the shaping of policy or the conduct of negotiations, as exceptional qualities of chairmanship—firmness, impartiality, politeness; the ability to prick a pretentious bubble, to relieve a strained situation, to rebuke the rude or restive and prod the bored or indifferent; and a detailed knowledge of the business of the meeting. Miller's personality was such that he could display all these qualities and capacities during his three years of chairmanship, among the most difficult years the Representative Body has ever passed through.

James Blakely Miller was born on April 9, 1877, at Kirkintilloch in Dunbartonshire, the son of the Rev. Andrew Miller. He was educated at Glasgow High School and at the University, where he became secretary of the Medico-Chirurgical Society. After graduating M.B., Ch.B. (with commendation) in 1898, J. B. Miller held the post of senior assistant at Town's Hospital, Glasgow, and then settled in general practice on the Lanarkshire border, in the valley of the Clyde. Bishopbriggs—its name coming down from pre-Reformation days—is only 15 minutes by bus from Glasgow Cross, but it is the centre of the mining and agricultural community among whom Miller found his lifework. In 1909 he proceeded to the M.D., again with commendation, and he also took the D.P.H. Besides being a general practitioner he was also a medical officer of health—for his native burgh of Kirkintilloch and for Kilsyth in Stirlingshire, both of them only a short distance from Bishopbriggs. He always took his public health duties seriously, and some years ago he wrote a useful article about the importance of the general practitioner as a health educator. A leading figure in the district in which he lived and worked, Dr. Miller was a justice of the peace for the County of Lanark, a past chairman of the Bishopbriggs District Ratepayers' Association, chairman of the local Horticultural Society, a trustee of the Cadder and District Miners' and Community Welfare, and one of the oldest members of the Cadder parish church, being father of the kirk session. He was a district medical officer for the county of Lanark, medical officer to the Post Office, Admiralty surgeon and agent, and medical referee to the Department of Health. During the first world war he was medical officer in charge of the auxiliary Red Cross hospital in his own parish of Cadder. In course of time he found wider fields for his energies as chairman of the Scottish Colliery Surgeons Committee, chairman of the Lanarkshire Local Medical and Panel Committee, and member of the Central Midwives Board for Scotland. In 1951 Dr. Miller completed fifty years of practice in and around Bishopbriggs, and his friends and patients marked the occasion by making a presentation to him at a public gathering in Cadder Parish Church Hall. Last year, at the Annual Meeting of the B.M.A. in Glasgow, Dr. Miller's own university conferred on him the honorary degree of doctor of laws. Professor Stanley Alstead, presenting him for the degree, described him as "a master of this difficult art of general practice," and as "a physician who personifies those virtues which have made the Scots doctor a revered figure throughout the world."



Dr. Miller first became a representative when the British Medical Association held its Annual Meeting at Glasgow in 1922, and in 1929 he was elected a member of the Council. Then began a round of central committee work of which he took his full share, although for him every meeting entailed two nights or two days in the train. He was chairman of the Health Services Committee which preceded the Medical Planning Com-

mission, and on that Commission itself he did excellent service as chairman of the Co-ordination Committee, a task which exactly suited his abilities. He was also, at various times, a member of the Public Health Committee (for a quarter of a century), the Parliamentary Elections Committee, and an earlier General Medical Services Committee which shaped the Association's proposals for a general medical service for the nation. Again, particularly on questions of industrial practice, workmen's compensation, and national health insurance, his experience and counsel were often of service. His knowledge of both the general practice and the public health fields made him a useful member of the liaison committee which ensures co-operation between the Association and the Society of Medical Officers of Health.

In 1945 he was elected by the Representative Meeting in London as its chairman for 1946. His election took place on the very day that Mr. Attlee's Government came into power, and the three years which followed were the most strenuous in the Association's history. They saw the introduction of the National Health Service Act, the mobilization of the profession against some of its provisions, the plebiscites, the resumed negotiations, and the conditional agreement to enter the Service subject to an amending Bill. His term of office ended within a week of the measure coming into operation. During those three years seven Representative Meetings were held, four of them devoted entirely, and the other largely, to the question of the National Health Service. In a similar crisis a generation earlier, when National Insurance was introduced, there were nine meetings of the Representative Body in the course of twenty months, and the two men who filled the chair during that period, Sir Ewen Maclean and Sir Jenner Verrall, had a stormy passage. But the conflict was perhaps sharper in 1946–8. The Association was by this time twice as large, its Divisions were better organized, it was politically more alive, and the demand for leadership was more acute. As chairman of the Representative Body Miller was faced with agenda containing hundreds of motions from Divisions, many of them similar in purpose but with differences of phrase which might be important, at all events in the eyes of the Division which had sent them forward. To assign priority and to make rulings as to how far one motion might be held to cover others was both an arduous and a delicate task, calling all the time for the utmost alertness and power of analysis, the blending of authority with tolerance, and the exercise of good humour to dispel any rankling sense of injustice.

Miller's Scottish humour, which was not artificial or forced but an idiom that was natural to him, never failed him. Not once in that long period was he outwardly perturbed. If he had occasion to utter a rebuke it was done in so whimsical a way that the lesson remained but not the sting. He was always scrupulously fair. In spite of his own obvious desire to get through the tide of words to the rock of decision, he resisted importunate calls that the question be now put or that the meeting proceed to the next business if he thought the matter had not been sufficiently debated. He never failed to give the proposer of a motion the right of reply, while hinting to him either that there was nothing to reply to in the arguments against him, or else that the arguments were so overwhelming that he could not possibly have any reply to them. He once remarked that the business of the Representative Meetings was got through thanks to a core of experienced representatives who never appeared on the platform and who had made up their minds uninfluenced by eloquence of any sort.

Dr. Miller underwent a serious operation in 1948, but in a surprisingly short time he was back again at Headquarters, looking rather more frail, but with mental energies unimpaired and a wit as sharp as ever. His recreations were golf and curling, gardening and field botany, and archaeology, for which last there is plentiful material in north-west Lanarkshire. Dr. Miller married Margaret Vaughan, daughter of the Rev. I. B. A. Watt, and he is survived by his widow, one son, and two daughters. Brownswood, Bishopbriggs, was a very happy home, and Dr. Andrew Blakely Miller and Dr. Marjory Buchan Miller, both of the Glasgow medical school, helped to carry on their father's practice there.

The CHAIRMAN OF COUNCIL, Dr. E. A. Gregg, writes: With the death of "J. B." a familiar and much-loved figure passed away—one of the old guard. He was a man of inflexible principle and great integrity and held in very high regard by all of us. His common sense and realistic approach to all problems was characteristic of all his contributions to debate, whether in Council or committee. His humorous asides and interjections during his chairmanship of the Representative Meetings were a delight and often a great help at a difficult moment.

Dr. J. B. Miller found the life of a family doctor a satisfying and good one, and he had no use for moaners and grumblers. There must be a great number who found in him a friend and helper in their troubles and illnesses, whose kindly ministrations will long be remembered. All his friends rejoiced with him when his old university conferred upon him the honorary degree of LL.D. during our meeting in Glasgow. He loved to recall his early days as a student, and his speech—a special one of his—when he described the old "bone" room and many of the incidents of those days was a sheer delight to us all.

We can ill afford to lose men such as "J. B." His memory and his influence on B.M.A. affairs will continue for a long time to come.

The CHAIRMAN OF THE REPRESENTATIVE BODY, Dr. I. D. Grant, writes: By the death of James Blakely Miller the West of Scotland has lost an outstanding personality. "J. B.," as he was known affectionately to his innumerable friends, was essentially a B.M.A. man. During a long and happy life he had cultivated many interests and hobbies, and the demands of a busy practice were not easily satisfied. But, despite all these activities, the welfare of the B.M.A. was always his first consideration. He occupied almost every high office of the Association in Scotland, and when in 1954 his Alma Mater conferred upon him the degree of LL.D. his colleagues, even more, I think, than himself, were gratified at the honour which was given to a most erudite and greatly loved general practitioner.

As chairman of the Representative Body, even though his health was failing a little, he made the long journey to London gladly and unsparingly. He played his full part in all the committees of the Association, and his charm of manner and pawky humour quickly won him the affection as well as the regard of his colleagues in the south. I well remember the first occasion on which he took the chair. Some representatives at an early stage of a bleak and foggy morning were just a little intolerant of the rather boring speaker. "J. B." appealed to the meeting: "You might perhaps allow him to go on. We are rather anxious to fill in the time anyhow, as the Birmingham train is an hour late."

He served on the Medical Planning Commission in 1940 and was largely responsible for many of the constructive suggestions made by that body for an improved medical service, but which, unfortunately, were not implemented by the politicians who eventually introduced the National Health Service. Like so many of his generation, he did

not take kindly to nationalized medicine, and was happy to live in semi-retirement after the inception of the National Health Service.

As an after-dinner speaker he was unsurpassed, and the flights of fancy on which he embarked on these occasions will long remain a pleasing memory to those of us who were privileged to hear him speak. However, the most outstanding service he rendered to the Association was one of which he himself was quite unconscious—that was his influence over his younger colleagues and his ability to arouse in them a desire to take part in B.M.A. work. By precept and example he showed us how much one man could do in the service of his fellows. He had a genius for friendship, and I do not think he had a single enemy. We know that the salutation which awaits him is, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

Dr. GUY DAIN writes: A Scot with so many of the good qualities of his race, J. B. Miller was not easily provoked to speech, but when he spoke it was with both wisdom and wit. He could, and frequently did, provide the short, snappy, and completely appropriate comment in the course of a discussion, and not infrequently when in the chair of the Representative Body. His speech proposing the health of the chairman of the R.B., then Sir Henry Brackenbury, was a masterpiece of humour and sly fun. But then he was to the B.M.A. over a long spell of years a wise counsellor and leader whose advice was always the result of careful thought and balanced judgment. For those of us who for so long have been associated with him in the work at Headquarters, his cheerful friendship and always helpful advice will be a great loss.

H. W. BARBER, M.B., F.R.C.P.

British dermatology was bereft of two eminent figures on the same day, January 13—Dr. H. W. Barber, of Guy's, and Dr. W. J. O'Donovan, of the London Hospital, to whom an obituary tribute appears on the next page. Both men were born in the same year. The careers of both in their first hospital appointments were interrupted by service in the first world war. Both gained a high reputation in dermatology and made contributions to its literature. Both were in consulting practice in the Harley Street area, within a couple of hundred yards of each other. Both became presidents of the Section of Dermatology of the Royal Society of Medicine. Dr. Barber, unlike Dr. O'Donovan, confined his activities to his profession and did not enter public life, but among his dermatological colleagues he was recognized as one who spoke with authority and out of wide experience. In the Dermatological Section, which every month holds a clinical discussion on a series of cases, Dr. Barber was a constant contributor, bringing forward unusual cases of his own and commenting in his thoughtful and often provocative way on the cases of others.

Harold Wordsworth Barber, the son of a Nottingham solicitor, was born on May 13, 1886. He was educated at Repton, and from there went on with a scholarship to Clare College, Cambridge, obtaining first-class honours in the Natural Sciences Tripos in 1908. His medical training was taken at Guy's, with which hospital he was associated until the end of his life. He graduated M.B., B.Ch. Cambridge, in 1911. In the following year he obtained the Arthur Durham Travelling Scholarship of Guy's, which enabled him to study dermatology in Paris and also at Hamburg, where he learned from the celebrated dermatologist, Professor Unna. He returned to be medical registrar at Guy's from 1913 to 1915, and took the M.R.C.P. at this time. In the first world war he joined the R.A.M.C. for service in India, Mesopotamia, German East Africa, and France. After the war he returned to his registrarship at Guy's and in 1919 was appointed physician to the skin department. From this time onwards he quickly made his reputation in the specialty he had chosen. He remained on the active staff of his hospital until 1951, when he became consultant to the department. He was also consulting dermatologist to the Royal Navy, and served at various times on the honorary staffs of the Prince of Wales and the Evelina Hospitals. A past-president of the British Association of Dermatology, he was a corresponding member of the French, German, and Vienna Dermatological Societies. He became Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians in 1922. His Lettsomian lectures to the Medical Society of London in 1929 were on the subject of "Dermatology in Relation to other Branches of Medicine" and were published in a shortened version in this *Journal*. At the Annual Meeting of the B.M.A. in 1932 Barber was president of the Section of Dermatology and Venereal Diseases. He contributed to the journal's numerous papers on dermatological and more general medical subjects, and was responsible for the section on diseases of the skin in Taylor and Poulton's *Medicine*. In 1952 he gave the Prosser White Oration.

He married Juliette Louise, daughter of Madame Veuve Champrenand, of Paris; they had no family.

We are indebted to Dr. L. FORMAN for the following appreciation: The passing of Dr. H. W. Barber will give deep sorrow to his friends, his colleagues, and to the large number of patients who were grateful for his skill and sympathetic understanding. He was one of the best known of British dermatologists at home and abroad. Visiting dermatologists to this country would always be found at some time or another in Dr. Barber's clinic at Guy's, and they had great respect and affection for him. Indeed, he was a worthy representative of the medical profession. Impressive and handsome of appearance, he kept his youthful figure and carriage to the last. He was fluent in conversation, and his intellectual quality and capacity were soon apparent.

His interests were wide, and in all of them a tenacious memory and an active interest enabled him to discourse on literature, the theatre, racing, cricket, and other sports. On all these subjects his views were original, occasionally iconoclastic, and revealed the consideration of a contemplative man on the trends and achievements of this century.

Dr. Barber began his postgraduate career as a general physician, and was a most successful medical registrar at Guy's at a time when there were only two registrars in the medical wards; all those who were in the wards at that time testify to his ability and the facility with which he could impart his knowledge. It was with this background of general medical knowledge and training that he approached dermatology, and it gave him the ability to excite the interest of students and postgraduates in the specialty. His careful and minute study of the skin lesion was integrated with his assessment of the patients' personality and medical status in a way that can rarely have been equalled. His

opinion was an excellent one, based on a wide reading in medicine, and his management of the case was a model in the art of therapy.

Dr. Barber wrote fluently and well. He anticipated and stimulated much of the work indicating the importance of disorders of metabolism, endocrine changes, psychological disorders, and chronic infection in the genesis of skin reactions. Of his numerous writings two give the measure of his comprehensive approach and grasp of the problems of medicine and well repay frequent reading. The first is the Lettsomian Lectures, already referred to, and the second, his Prosser White Oration, "What is Truth?" published in the *Transactions of the St. John's Hospital Dermatological Society* in 1953.

Those of us who were trained by Dr. Barber will be ever grateful for the experience. He could make one see and understand. His knowledge of the fundamentals of medicine and of dermatology enabled him to present every case in a manner that provoked interest and thought and a determination to enlarge one's knowledge and experience. To his juniors he was kindness itself, and took the greatest pleasure in their progress and success. He never condescended, and was eager to refer to the observations and publications for which they were responsible. Dr. Barber's contributions to medicine will not be ignored, and in our hearts he will live. To his widow we extend our deepest sympathy.

A. E. S. writes: When I first went into the wards at Guy's H. W. Barber was a medical registrar. He was a quiet, charming personality. In many rounds with him, one in particular is remembered. He talked about agnosia, alexia, etc. He said that in reading up any subject it was well to read it in as many books as possible. I have seen him on many occasions since and have been his patient. He was admired and respected by all.

W. J. O'DONOVAN, O.B.E., M.D., M.R.C.P.

The death was announced on January 13 of Dr. W. J. O'Donovan, who was for a quarter of a century physician in charge of the skin and phototherapy departments of the London Hospital and lecturer on diseases of the skin and on syphilis at the Medical College. Dr. O'Donovan was well known in many spheres—medical, political, and religious—and in all of them his ebullient personality, his wit and repartee, and his good-humoured zeal in controversy made a marked impression.

William James O'Donovan was born in Kent in 1886, but his family was from County Cork. He was a student at London University, entering the London Hospital Medical College in 1905 and qualifying in 1909. He graduated M.B., B.S. in 1911, proceeded M.D. in 1913, and took the M.R.C.P. in 1914. After qualification he held for over a year the post of pathological assistant at his hospital and at a later period he was for some time junior assistant director at the pathological institute there. During the first world war he was chief medical officer to the Ministry of Munitions, and for his services was made O.B.E. in 1920. He went on to widen his experience in general medicine and surgery and then returned to the London as first assistant in the skin and light department. In his early days as physician he had charge of the syphilis block and later of the syphilis out-patient clinic until a separate venereal diseases clinic was established under the authority of the London County Council in 1930. After a quarter of a century at first as assistant physician and then as physician he retired in 1952.

A well-known dermatologist, O'Donovan combined with his dermatology an interest in pathology, in order, as he said, to prevent himself from becoming what his chief, J. H. Sequeira, once described as a "pimple doctor." At one time he was coroner's pathologist for London. Perhaps his most outstanding contribution to dermatology was his exposition of emotional factors in skin disease. This aspect was much neglected by physicians thirty years ago when he wrote his *Dermatological Neuroses*. A considerable textbook of his on *Diseases of the Hair* was written in a fortnight. He made contributions on a wide range of subjects, including industrial dermatitis and cancer and T.N.T. poisoning (he was a member of the Government T.N.T. Committee). For a time he assisted in the editorship of the *British Journal of Dermatology*. He was consulting physician to the skin department of Queen Mary's Hospital, Stratford, and to a number of other hospitals; consulting dermatologist to Dr. Barnardo's Homes; and lecturer at the London Institute of Dermatology, St. John's Hospital. In the second world war he served in the R.A.M.C. from 1939 to 1945, when he was released with the rank of lieutenant-colonel. He held the appointment of adviser in dermatology to the Middle East Forces in Egypt and Palestine. He was an assistant examiner in medicine in the University of London, and in 1952 he was elected a representative of the Faculty of Medicine on the standing committee of convocation of the University.

[Elliott and Fry

For seven years Dr. O'Donovan was honorary secretary of the Marylebone Division of the British Medical Association, for two further years its chairman, and for four years he represented it in the Representative Body. In 1933 at the Annual Meeting at Dublin he was president of the Section of Dermatology, and in 1939–41 president of that section of the Royal Society of Medicine.

During the general strike of 1926, when the electricity supply to the London Hospital was cut off, his energetic and public protest brought him with a bound into national politics, and in 1931 he was returned to Parliament as Conservative member for the Mile End division of Stepney, in which the London Hospital stands. His reversal of a 6,000 Labour majority was a tribute to his personality rather than an endorsement of his politics; he failed to hold the seat at the General Election in 1935, and was similarly unsuccessful in 1950 in opposing Dr. Edith Summerskill in West Fulham. He did not fit very well into Parliament. He was not able, as the members of the old Nationalist party were, to adapt his Irish exuberance to the constraints of Parliamentary procedure, but on the political platform, especially with an antagonistic audience, he was in his element. He occupied various positions of prominence in the Conservative Party, and was president of the University of London Conservative Association.

Dr. O'Donovan was a devout Catholic, and never hesitated to introduce Catholic doctrine into medical or political discussions. For more than 30 years he was honorary secretary of the Guild of St. Luke, SS. Cosmas and Damian. In 1951 he received from the Pope the

honour of the Knighthood of St. Gregory the Great. Just before the second world war he was appointed by the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster the leader of Catholic Action in England.

He married Ethel K. Smith, who was a great help to him in his professional and public life, and they had one son and two daughters.

We are indebted to Dr. BRIAN RUSSELL for the following appreciation: Dr. O'Donovan succeeded Dr. Sequeira as physician to the skin department at the London Hospital in 1926 and held the post for 26 years. The esteem in which he was held was indicated by a following of 70 students and doctors on his last teaching round. He had an extensive training in general medicine and pathology before taking up dermatology, and he always maintained a practical interest in morbid anatomy, holding that the post-mortem table was as conducive to right thinking and the pursuit of truth as laboratory work at a teak bench. During the second world war he served in the Middle East, and those who trained with him at Tidworth will never forget the zest with which he applied himself to adjustment from civilian to military habits.

Dr. O'Donovan will be remembered as one of the great personalities of the medical profession during the first half of the twentieth century. He had an ebullient mind with ready wit and unfailing repartee suitable for every occasion. He was more interested in sick people with their skin affections than in hair-splitting arguments over individual spots and pimples : he believed in the importance of emotional factors in the genesis of many common dermatoses, and worte a short monograph, *Dermatological Neuroses,* in 1927 which was the prototype of much writing on dermatology from its psychiatric aspects.

Those who were fortunate enough to attend his political meetings will never forget his oratory and ability to cope with hecklers, which soon earned him the right to sit in Westminster. Hearing him giving evidence in court made one think that he might have made just as successful a career in the legal profession as in medicine. Always cheerful in adversity, he could joke about his own illness even after the first of the three episodes which progressively struck him down. All those who have enjoyed his quips and sallies, and who have thus found the acquisition of knowledge less tedious, owe a debt of gratitude to this irrepressible and irreplaceable personality for having observed when he first came to the London Hospital the inscription over the Medical College doorway, *Amara lento tempera risu,* which may be very freely translated, "Temper the bitter things of life with a smile."

Dr. PATRICK HALL-SMITH writes: I should like to pay tribute to the late Dr. W. J. O'Donovan, with whom I was closely associated, first in the Army, and then as his senior registrar at the London Hospital. In the difficult years just after the war no young dermatologist could have served a more stimulating or considerate chief, and many besides myself owe their careers to his championship and guidance. "O'D," as he was popularly known, had a great presence and a truly sparkling personality; he was a gifted and original speaker, possessing a lively forensic skill in argument. Always an individualist, he wore a scarlet-lined cloak during his Army service, and discomfited a series of inspecting generals who imagined they were conversant with military law. Hecklers at West Fulham in the 1950 election also found the contest unequal. His learning and intellect were apparent, but those who knew him well recognized too a man of strong faith and courage. Generations of old-Londoners will recall him as an exceptional clinician and teacher, and as one who was never dull; his colleagues in dermatology mourn a unique and lovable personality whose provocative statements enlivened many a dreary meeting. He will not be forgotten, and his writings will live on as an important contribution to British dermatology.

G. V. ANREP, M.D., D.Sc., M.Sc., F.R.S.

Dr. G. V. Anrep, professor of physiology in Fouad I University, Cairo, died in Cairo on January 9, aged 63.

Gleb V. Anrep was born in St. Petersburg, the son of Basil von Anrep, who studied the action of cocaine and in 1880 suggested its use as a local anaesthetic. From the University of Dorpat he went on to study medicine in St. Petersburg. Before qualifying in medicine in 1914 he worked for a time as demonstrator of physiology in the Military Medical Academy at St. Petersburg, and he had also visited London and worked in the physiology department of University College. During the war he served as a medical officer in the Russian Army until 1917 and then returned to St. Petersburg as senior assistant in physiology at the Institute of Experimental Medicine in that city. He joined the forces of General Denikine, who fought against the Bolsheviks, and not long afterwards he had to leave Russia. Settling in London, he was first appointed assistant, then in 1923 senior assistant, and finally in 1926 reader in physiology at University College. He obtained the D.Sc. degree in physiology in 1923 and was awarded the Schäfer Prize and William Julius Mickle Fellowship two years later. He became a naturalized British citizen in 1925. Before going to Cairo as professor of physiology in 1931 he was for a time a lecturer in physiology at Cambridge, and also Cooper-Lane lecturer at Stanford University, San Francisco. He was elected F.R.S. in 1928.

Most of Anrep's studies were on the circulation, and he published numerous articles in the *Journal of Physiology,* the *Proceedings of the Royal Society,* and other journals. His Lane Medical Lectures were published in book form in 1936 under the title *Studies in Cardiovascular Regulation.* Anrep was a former pupil and collaborator of Professor Pavlov, and in 1927 he translated and edited Pavlov's book, *Conditioned Reflexes,* which had been published in Russian in the previous year. This was a most important piece of work, for it was the first time that a full account of Pavlov's researches had appeared in the English language. Apart from the ordinary difficulties of translation, Anrep had to cope with an entire new terminology. The result was remarkably successful.

G. H. G. writes : G. V. Anrep was a pupil of Pavlov and played an important part in making conditioned reflexes known outside Russia. He had paid a short visit to University College, London, before the first world war, and came back there in 1918 owing to political events in Russia. He thus came under the influence of Starling, and soon showed that he was a skilful experimenter who could make heart–lung preparations more rapidly than other people. He published a series of papers on the metabolism of the salivary glands and on the regulation of the circulation. With Starling, and with other people, he carried out elaborate experiments such as the perfusion of the head and neck by means of a heart–lung preparation, and worked out details of the reflexes controlling the circulation. He was elected F.R.S. in 1928 at the early age of 37. At about this time he added much to our knowledge of the coronary circulation and the circulation in voluntary muscles, proving that the actual contraction of the muscles caused a stoppage of the flow, and recording the reactive hyperaemia which followed even when the flow was stopped for a fraction of a second. This work is summarized in the Lane Medical Lectures which he gave at Stanford University in 1936.

In Egypt Anrep became interested in histamine, and published a series of papers with G. S. Barsoum and others

on the physiology of this substance. He was the first to show that normal urine contains not only free histamine but also inactive conjugated histamine, and that this comes from the intestine. He discovered the first histamine-releaser, tubocurarine.

He was proud of his British nationality, but this cannot have helped him when, a few years ago, his career was again interrupted by political events and he had to give up work in the laboratory. He was an energetic and enterprising person with many interests. He learned Arabic well enough for intelligent discussion of the world's affairs. He drove an old Ford car on expeditions across the desert which more cautious people regarded as foolhardy. He was an enthusiastic philatelist who had an arrangement with postmasters in Cairo which led to the discovery of what he called "the Anrep variations." He was very good company and fond of telling dramatic tales about himself; it is sad that we shall hear him no more.

Sir ARTHUR KEITH, M.D., LL.D., D.Sc. F.R.C.S., F.R.S.

Dr. F. PARKES WEBER writes: Everyone knows of Sir Arthur Keith's enthusiasm in regard to the collection of skulls when he was conservator of the Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons, London. He was not contented with one specimen of the skulls of any particular class of natives, but preferred to have a considerable number for purposes of comparison. Shortly before the first world war a cousin of mine, who was somewhat of an amateur anthropologist, lived in a flat close to the British Museum. He possessed a small collection of skulls of the aborigines of a small island in Oceania. As he was going to be married he wished to get rid of these skulls in deference to the wish of his fiancée. He thought of presenting them to the collection of Sir Arthur Keith. The latter invited my cousin to dinner with him at a Holborn restaurant, in order to discuss the matter. After the meal Sir Arthur said to my cousin: "If you don't give me those skulls I'll have yours." This so tickled the fancy of my cousin that, if he had not already made up his mind, he decided to present the collection to the Royal College of Surgeons. Subsequently, after my cousin had returned from Salonika, where he had served during the war, I saw a good deal of him and he told me the above story.

A memorial service for the late Sir ALFRED B. HOWITT, C.V.O., M.D., will be held in the chapel of St. Thomas's Hospital, London, S.E.1, at 12.15 p.m. on Thursday, January 27.

Medico-Legal

BABY'S DEATH FROM BORON POISONING

[FROM OUR MEDICO-LEGAL CORRESPONDENT]

On November 23, 1954, the inquest was concluded at Ealing before Mr. H. G. Broadbridge, coroner for West Middlesex, on a 3-months-old baby boy called Tony Smith, who died on September 28, 1954, from boron poisoning.

The baby had been a little sore about the buttocks and between the legs. His mother asked in a chemist's shop for a boracic powder and told the chemist what she wanted to use it for. She was sold some powder in a little cardboard drum. The powder had no smell and the child's grandmother thought that the drum was labelled "boracic acid powder."

After the powder had been used for about a week the baby seemed ill, and on September 19 he was admitted to Hillingdon Hospital suffering with severe vomiting and diarrhoea. He also had a ruptured navel. Three days later Dr. H. V. L. Finlay, the paediatrician at Hillingdon Hospital, diagnosed poisoning by boracic acid, and the whole skin, including that inside the nose and mouth, began to peel. The boron content of the urine was found to be 28.7 mg. per 100 ml. Six days later the baby died.

In evidence Dr. Finlay said that the raw condition of the baby's napkin area on admission to hospital was ideal for the absorption of boric acid. He had never seen any harmful effects from the use of boric acid preparations, but emphasized the danger of using pure boracic acid in powder form, and thought it should not be sold indiscriminately over the counter.

Dr. Donald Teare, who made the post-mortem examination, found the boric acid content of the brain to be 13 mg. per 100 g., of the lung to be 28 mg. per 100 g., and of the kidney to be 33 mg. per 100 g., which together with the amount in the urine previously estimated was within the range in which boron poisoning occurs. Dr. Teare said that ordinary powders sold for babies usually contained 5 to 10% of boric acid, and that of the 37,000 necropsies he had made this was the first occasion on which he had found boric acid poisoning. He thought that what had happened was that the baby's mother had been sold neat boric acid as a powder.

A verdict of death by misadventure was recorded.

Vital Statistics

Influenza

A few more outbreaks of virus-B influenza had been reported up to January 17, and the increases in the weekly claims on the Ministry of Pensions and National Insurance suggest a greater prevalence among adults. In London reports of sickness indicate the probable presence of influenza, and in the environs the situation is much the same. In the northern half of the country and in Wales the disease is waning; in the southern half it is still advancing here and there, particularly in the eastern region, but progress is slow. Clinically the infection is usually mild. Laboratory reports continue to confirm most of the outbreaks as being due to virus B, but two patients in the midlands have been proved to be suffering from a virus-A infection. No spread from either has been traced.

Smallpox in France

A message from the French Ministry of Public Health and Population, dated January 8, reports the number of cases of smallpox in the Vannes area as 25, including two deaths, though a press report from Paris dated January 12 gives the number of cases as 40, including 4 deaths. The first case occurred at the beginning of December, 1954, in an unvaccinated child aged 1 year. The child's father had returned 10 days previously from military duties in Indo-China, where he had been in a hospital in which cases of smallpox were being treated.

Causes of Death in June Quarter

In England and Wales in the June quarter deaths from respiratory tuberculosis (1,657) were 9% fewer than in the corresponding period of 1953. Cancer deaths were slightly more—21,826 as compared with 21,451; but deaths from cancer of the uterus (888) were 12% below those in the second quarter of 1953. Accidental deaths rose to 3,633 (3,272 in June quarter, 1953). This was mainly accounted for by increases in accidental poisoning (243 deaths compared with 177 a year earlier), falls (1,249 compared with 969), and burns (166 compared with 146). The number of suicides (1,415) was the highest since the June quarter, 1939.